

German SS and Police Unit Radio Messages in British Archives

Notes extracted from the Newly Released files of German SS and Police Intercepts deciphered by British codebreakers.

(Notes made by David Irving during research for the second volume of his Churchill's War.)

IN THE Public Record Office in London (PRO) are now housed the records of the former Police section at Bletchley Park, where British codebreakers had begun reading the German SS and police messages even before WWII.

The police section amassed thousands of intercepts of police units on the eastern front, police headquarters in Germany, and concentration camp commandants reporting to Berlin. It is worth noting, as the late Professor Sir Frank Hinsley the official historian points out, that nowhere in these myriads of (top secret, enciphered) messages is there any reference to gas chambers or gassings. **'The returns from Auschwitz, the largest of the camps with 20,000 prisoners, mentioned illness as the main cause of death, but included references to shootings and hangings. There were no references in the decrypts to gassing.'**

Professor Sir Frank Hinsley et al., *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Its Influence on Strategy and Operations*, Cambridge, 1979 - 84, 3 vols., vol. ii, appendix, page 673.]

WHAT IS surprising is that although every minute detail of SS and concentration camp operations is mirrored in these thousands of messages, preserved either in the original German, or in English translation (and sometimes in both)

- there is no reference whatever to mass killing operations by gas or any other method in the camps.
- Every other conceivable detail is however reflected in the signals, including a signal to Auschwitz commandant S.S. *Sturmbannführer* Rudolf Höss in **September 1942** regretting that rubber truncheons are 'unobtainable in Breslau.'

[GC&CS German Police report No. 41, 1942, Oct 5, 1942 (PRO file HW.16/6, part ii).]

Bletchley Park historians recalled the German code weaknesses and security lapses, always the

Main' which 'made the cryptographer's life a happy one.' Indications of internal disintegration in Germany were disappointingly few. Interception of low-frequency traffic was much easier in France. On the evening of **May 9, 1940** there was decoded the urgent German summons to prevent a high official from crossing into Holland; this was the only hint of GELB from this source. Work did not then resume until **August 1940** at BP. Berlin began to jump on security breaches, like messages exceeding the maximum permitted 180 letters and easy standard cribs, like a daily report on the rise and fall of the Elbe. For the BARBAROSSA traffic a separate key and new frequencies were instituted; in August 1941 two sets of keys in the East were introduced for each day. Even so they got 30 to 100 decodes a day, with forty staff working on the task.

On **September 13, 1941** Kurt Daluege, *Chef der Ordnungspolizei*, sent the following message to the *HSSuPf* of the forces in Russia,

'The danger of decipherment by the enemy of wireless messages is great. For this reason only such matters are to be transmitted by wireless as can be considered open [groups missed]. Confidential or Secret, but not information which is containing State secrets, calls for especially secret treatment. Into this category fall exact figures of executions (these are to be sent by Courier) '

The scale of these executions was 'a clear indication of the utter ruthlessness of the Germans in Russia.' The GC&CS report adds,

'The anxiety may have been increased by a speech by the Prime Minister drawing the attention of the world to this carnage. In any case the German authorities evidently demanded more drastic steps still, and these culminated in a complete change of cypher in mid-September. Double transposition [a straightforward system, and relatively simple to break] was dropped (never to appear again) and Double Playfair took its place.'

The result was the reverse of what the Germans had intended, because if they had retained Double Transposition with still further splitting up of keys it would soon have put BP out of business, Double Playfair quickly proved to be a most breakable cypher, and it became the exception to fail to break a day. From the spring of 1942 the Russians began providing high quality raw intercepts; in return BP provided decrypts and daily keys until December -- they say -- when liaison unfortunately broke down and nothing more was received. Throughout the winter of 1942 German police traffic was one of the few sources providing information from the eastern front, but in November the German police, nervous again about security, introduced their next major cypher alteration. By February 1943 however the section was again up to four to five hundred decodes a week. BP now had five hundred people, including those at the 'Y' stations dedicated to this task, working on the Police codes. Things got easy in July 1944 when the Police Flying Squadron in Poland sent in a standard daily report. But on September 1, 1944, the Germans introduced the new raster cypher, the best hand-cypher they had ever devised; the time-

naturally, of increasing interest and provides as a whole a singular picture of the last days of the Nazi regime and of its individual leaders. For this reason cryptographic work was continued long after VE-day (no police-keys were ever captured) ' [GC&CS, 'History of the German Police Section, 1939--45' in PRO file HW.3/155.]

On September 2, 1941 Churchill is shown a brief report from Nigel de Grey on 'German Police,' a report to Himmler dated **August 26, 1941** :

'A report from the Berditschew Korosten area mentions that the Russians are still retiring and burning the villages. Prisoners taken number 47, Jews shot 1246, losses nil.'

Churchill rings the '1,246' in red ink. [PRO file HW.1/40]

On **October 13, 1941** Churchill read a summary which included German police messages analysed by Nigel de Grey two days earlier:

'On 26/9 arrangements were being made for a 3 or 4 day visit by Himmler to the Southern Area of the Russian front. Places to be visited were Shitomir, Berditschew (where the dwellings etc. of the German colonies were the attraction. *Dept Note* : It will be remembered that the Russians were reported to have removed the German population to Siberia.) Thence to Kiew, if possible to Uman, then Krivoi-Rog, Nikolaiew and possibly Cherson. He was accompanied by his fleet of cars including his wireless car. 'On 13/9 the 3 officers commanding on the North, Centre and South Russian Front were reminded that the danger of their messages being decoded was great. Among other secret matters that should not be sent by wireless was the number of executions carried out.'

signed, de G/11.10.41. [[Nigel] de G[rey], 'German Police,' Oct 11, 1941, in PRO file HW.1/135.] Churchill lined both the latter sentences in red ink.

De Grey reported on **October 17, 1941** , - Churchill ticked this para in margin on Oct 18 --

'A touch of somewhat macabre humour emerges from the warning recently issued to Senior Officers that executions were not to be reported by W/T. The order has been variously interpreted -- some report "Action according to the usages of war", while others report that so many partisans are "dead" -- as distinct from "shot".'

He later added that "There has been noted a pretty consistent demand for Anti-typhoid lymph in the eastern areas for the inoculation of Police units. It is difficult to know whether these demands in any way exceed the normal, given the conditions occasioned by war.' [GC&CS German Police Section, [Nigel] de G[rey], 'German Police, Oct 17, 1941 (PRO file HW.1/148).]

CX/MSS/1071/T6. On **June 9, 1942** 'Most Secret, Chefsache, Nur durch Offizier' this order was sent by *OKW WFSt Qu Abt. K to Pz Armee Afrika*):

According to reports to hand there are said to be numerous German political refugees with the Free French units in Africa. The Führer has ordered that the severest measures are to be taken against those concerned. They are therefore to be mercilessly wiped out in battle, and in cases where they escape being killed in battle, a military sentence is to be pronounced immediately by the nearest German officer and they are to be shot out of hand, unless they have to be temporarily retained for Intelligence purposes. This order must not be forwarded in writing. Commanding officers are to be told verbally.

This was passed to General Auchinleck at 5:11 p.m., June 12, as MK/6635. Churchill noted next to the final para, '**C keep for record. WSC 13.vi.**' (OKW WFSt QM dept Kalif (*Pz Armee Afrika*), Jun 9, 1942, intercept CX/MSS/1071/T6, dated Jun 12, 1942 (PRO file HW.1/643); original signal is OKW/WFSt/Qu. (Verw.) an *PzArmee Afrika über Dt General b Obdko d Ital. Wehrmacht, 9.6.1942, FRR Fernschreiben, gKdos, Chefs*, NA T313/476/4572.]

On **October 26, 1942** the codebreakers found Berlin warning Auschwitz to stand by to receive two visitors from the Führer's Chancellery in Berlin - the agency supervising euthanasia and various other killing schemes - for a lengthy stay at the camp: they would be setting up an X-ray sterilisation operation, the radio signal said (this being the method chosen by the S.S. to keep the Jews from breeding). [*EDITOR: Similar techniques had been in use in the U.S.A. for some time.*] (GC&CS German Police Section intercept: Lolling, Amt D III, to Auschwitz, Oct 26, 1942 (PRO file HW.16/11).]

On **October 27, 1942** Sachsenhausen reported that it was shipping to Auschwitz two hundred Soviet prisoners of war found to have contracted tuberculosis. (GC&CS German Police Section intercept: *KL Sachsenhausen (gez. Liebehenschel) an Amt D III, Oct 27, 1942* (PRO file HW.16/11).]

After Berlin ordered that all camp fatalities were to be reported, on **December 1, 1942** Buchenwald dutifully reported, in their secret code, a total of 134 deaths from natural causes during November including four Jews. (GC&CS German Police Section intercept: *KL Buchenwald (gez. Hoven) an Amt D III, betr Meldung der Todesfällen von Häftlingen*, Dec 1, 1942 (PRO file HW.16/11).]

On **December 8, 1942** Dr Wirths reported **twenty-seven male and thirty-six female typhus deaths in Auschwitz during the previous week**. (GC&CS German Police Section intercept: *KL Auschwitz, signed Dr Wirths, an Amt D III, btr Stand der Fleckfiebererkrankungen*, Dec 8,

During **early 1943** the intercepts were found to contain with greater frequency the word *Sonderbehandlung*, special treatment, which was evidently a thinly veiled reference [*in theory*] to the termination of Germany's enemies. [Re Sonderbehandlung.] In one such message on **January 17, 1943** the chief of police in Kiev reported laconically, 'So far 853 screened and 614 special-treated.' (GC&CS German Police Section intercept GPD1238I/2/4 Jan 18, 1943: *BdS Kiew und Befehlststelle Sipo und SD*, Owritsch, to Berlin, Jan 17, 1943 (PRO file HW.16/11).] A month later a report to the same police chief in Kiev after completion of the anti-partisan sweep HORNUNG listed the body count as

'(a) enemy dead eighty-two, (b) suspects and special-treated 1,124.'

(GC&CS German Police Section intercept: *Bericht an HSSuPf Kiew, Gesamtergebnis Unternehmen Hornung* , 1943 (PRO file HW.16/11).]

'German Police, 34/42' signed ACT, **July 19, 1942** :

'Eighty British prisoners (*Häftlinge*) suitable for employment as 'Capos' are required for the concentration camp at Auschwitz (Schlesien).'

ACT commented that '**Capos**' appear to be overseers or foremen selected from among the prisoners themselves. (A signal timed June 23, 1942]. (PRO file **HW.1/761**]

The same report states ('German Police, 34/42' signed ACT, July 19, 1942:], 'A message from Himmler to SS *Gruppenführer* Jedicke, Riga, seems to refer to the abiding quarrel between the SS and the Army.

"Tell the gentlemen," says Himmler, "that I shall not stand for any special pleading or explanations of exceptional cases and the like. Moreover, not another soldier shall enter Weissruthenien; mastery of the situation will be gained there too. Do everything to carry things through vigorously with the forces at your disposal."

(**July 7, 1942**). (PRO file **HW.1/761**).

SS Gruf. Müller to Auschwitz **September 10, 1942** , betr *Vollzug von Standgerichturteilen. 'Das von Standgericht Emburg ausgesprochene Todesurteil gegen Walzendreher Eugen Biren, geboren 6.4.14, ist durch Erschiessen zu vollziehen.'*

von der Kanzlei des Führers am Donnerstag den 29.10.1942, 0940 Uhr, vom Bahnhof Mylowitz abzuholen, und für längere Zeit im Lager unterzubringen. Es handelt sich um die Röntgensterilisation, die nunmehr anlaufen soll. Gleichzeitig wird der Scharführer OLTM als erster SDG im KL.AU bestätigt.'

Auschwitz, **November 9, 1942**, signed Dr Wirths, to Amt D III, btr *Stand der Fleckfiebererkrankungen am 9.11.1942*; four SS men with *Fleckfieber, seit 2.11.92 in der Res Laz., Kattowitz eingewiesen; im Männer KZ 37 Fleckfieberverdachtsfälle, im Frauen KZ 51 Verdachtsfälle*. Very few deaths, one man, eight women Abgänge durch Tod.

(In a PRO file **HW16/9**, 'German police reports, unnumbered' are the following:] Report dated **November 24, 1942**, on Police Battalions, their movements, by number, 1 through 325. Report on Police Regiments Interrogation of SS *Hauptscharführer* Robert Barth, Austrian. Was member of *Einsatzgruppe D* in Russia from June 1941.

[Another report from Auschwitz, **November 9, 1942**, to Amt D III, btr *Fleckfiebererkrankungen*] **December 8, 1942** : *seit 1.12.42 27 Tote im Männerlager, 36 im Frauenlager.*

On **October 27, 1942** KL Sachsenhausen reported *Überstellung von 200 am Tbc erkrankten sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen dem KL Auschwitz. gez Liebehenschel.*

The PRO file **HW.16/11**, *Extracts from Decodes, German Police Section* contains flimsy original typed copies in German of intercepted signals from ten concentration camps to Amt D III (Glücks) and from eastern front police units e.g. *Sonderkommando Bragin*, engaged in *Bandenbekämpfung*, with typical entries relating to such operations, weapons found, Banditen, Cetniks, hostages shot, etc., executions of '83 aus politischem Sektor'; a series of reports of prisoners including individually named Jews (e.g. Hermann Israel Dingfelder) being shot August - September 1942 bei *Fluchtversuch aus dem Lager Flossenbürg*. Also a report dated **December 1, 1942** from Buchenwald to Amt D III, *betr Meldung der Todesfällen von Häftlingen, im November 1942*, listing those of *naturliche Todesursache*, 134 altogether, including 4 Jews (gez. Hoven).

Fahrgenehmigung signed by Liebehenschel for Lkw for *Exekution von 3 polnischen Zivilarbeitern in Flossenbürg*.

January 18, 1943 GPD1238I/2/4: DRE9 Nr.6 1630 172 SQO ES 2
Ab BdS KIEW und Befehlststelle Sipo und SD, OWRUTSCH
17.1.43, 45 Sonderbehandlung. Bisher 853 überprüft und 614 sonderbehandelt . (. . . remainder corrupt . . .] Von SD BRAGIN (Bragin was a location behind the eastern front].

There is a report on **February 19, 1943** to *HSSuPf Führungsstab Kiew* on Operation **HORNUNG**, which includes *Gesamtergebnis: A) Feindtote 82, B) Verdächtige und*

Grosslager aus über 100 kleineren Lagern mit Kampfständen und Bunkern.

March 23, 1943 References to *Vollstreckung von Todesurteilen gegen Iwan Malomanow, etc, angeordnet von S.S Obergruppenführer Prützmann.*

MI14(d)/0/161 a 'most secret source' reports on June 3, 1943 on a disappointing lack of chaos caused by the attacks on German dams in early hours of **May 17, 1943**. The Germans, it seemed, had moved with usual efficiency to repair the damage. By 0950 operational police HQ Möhne had been set up. Nothing in the intercepts indicated any public disturbance or rioting had resulted, units were withdrawing on May 21, the few Ruhr bridges which had been closed were reopened to traffic on May 23 and 24. 'It is perhaps also of interest to note that up to and including 23 May no message about the dams was reported by the ordinary most secret police source, although most air raids have been reflected in requests from German policemen on active service to come home on compassionate leave or, if at home, to have leave extended.' (PRO file, 'German police reports, unnumbered,' file HW16/9).

Hut 3 sent to CSS personal, etc, Inglis, et al in Whitehall, **Apr 19, 1945**, intercept CX/MSS/C.476 (marked and sidelined in green ink: 'Boniface') a signal from SS WVHA, *Amtsgruppe D*, Oranienburg, signed Glücks, *SS Gruf und GenLtn d Waffen SS Funkspruch* dated April 16, 1945, to *HSSuPf Main, SS OGruf und Gen d Pol Dr (Benno) Martin*:

'Subject: Flossenbürg concentration camp. Flossenbürg has fallen into the enemy's hands. In other cases **the enemy has turned part of the prisoners (many of them armed) loose on the civilian population.**

'Please take the necessary measures from your end and on your responsibility.

The Jewish prisoners must at all costs be transferred to Concentration Camp Dachau. [!!! NOT executed? At all costs?]

(Glücks to Martin, Apr 16; intercept CX/MSS/C.476 sent by Hut 3 to CSS, Inglis, et al., Apr 19, 1945 (PRO file HW.1/3713).)

General Gustave Bertrand's 1973 book *Enigma* also mentions on pages 117 - 8 the SS messages dealing with the executions of Jews. Cooper thinks they were sent in Enigma ORANGE - a steckered Enigma key, but one often broken by hand methods in Hut Six at this time. 'See History of Hut ix, vol. ii, page 2.'

Miscellaneous.

referring to Auschwitz in file WO.208/4296.

Interrogations of

- a Polish timber merchant, born 28.2.12, at Birkenau 1.8.43-30.1.44: routine references to gas chambers **but not himself a witness**.
- Polish bricklayer, born 20.1.23, at Auschwitz, references to gassings, **not a witness**
- French student, born 15.1.19, at Auschwitz 4.44 - 27.1.45;

and other such items, all **very indeterminate about actual goings-on (as only hearsay)**.

